

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 CU-02

AID-05 /063 W

----- 126724

P R 302030Z MAY 75 ZDK
FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4051
INFO USCINCSO
PANCANAL

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EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PN

SUBJ: GOVERNMENT "RESTRICTIONS" ON MEDIA CLARIFIED

REF: PANAMA 3165

SUMMARY: AN OFFICIAL MINISTRY OF GOVERNMENT AND JUSTICE COMMUNIQUE, ISSUED MAY 29, HAS CLARIFIED -- AND SUBSTANTIALLY MODIFIED -- MAY 28 STATEMENT OF "RESTRICTIONS" ON BROADCAST MEDIA. APPEARANCE OF COMMUNIQUE TENDS TO CONFIRM REPORT THAT MINISTER RICARDO RODRIGUEZ HAD GONE WELL BEYOND HIS INSTRUCTIONS. END SUMMARY

1. THE MAY 29 GOVERNMENT AND JUSTICE MINISTRY COMMUNIQUE, THE FULL TEXT OF WHICH FOLLOWS, IS IN THE NATURE OF A CAUTION RATHER THAN AN ORDER, TO RADIO STATIONS ALONE, TO REFRAIN FROM IRRESPONSIBLE REPORTING AND COMMENTARY. NO MENTION WAS MADE OF SANCTIONS FOR THOSE WHO FAIL TO EXERCISE THE REQUESTED RESTRAINT. INTERESTINGLY, THE COMMUNIQUE WAS ISSUED BY VICE MINISTER CESAR RODRIGUEZ MAYLIN AS ACTING MINISTER.

2. BEGIN TEXT: THE MINISTRY OF GOVERNMENT AND JUSTICE,
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AWARE OF ITS RESPONSIBILITY FOR PRESERVING PRUDENCE,

SERENITY AND CALM IN THE COUNTRY THROUGH THE SOCIAL COMMUNICATION MEDIA, CALLS THE ATTENTION OF HOLDERS OF RADIO FREQUENCIES AND TO COMMENTATORS USING THEM THAT THEY SHOULD REFRAIN FROM FESTINATING OR CREATING ALARM WITH REPORTS DEALING WITH EDUCATIONAL AND STUDENT MATTERS, WITH THE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES, AND WITH THE PUBLIC SERVICES. CONSEQUENTLY, WHENEVER REFERENCE IS MADE TO REPORTS DEALING WITH THE FOREGOING, WE URGE THAT COMPETENT OFFICIALS BE CONSULTED. THIS REQUEST STEMS FROM A RECENT TENDENCY OBSERVED IN SOME BROADCASTING STATIONS IN THE COUNTRY, TO TREAT TOPICS VITAL TO THE FUTURE OF THE NATION IRRESPONSIBLY AND WITH A LACK OF SERIOUSNESS.

ITS PURPOSE IS TO MAINTAIN A CLIMATE OF TRANQUILITY IN THE STUDENT FIELD AND IN THE REST OF THE NATIONAL COMMUNITY.

THE FOREGOING SUMS UP THE DOCTRINE ESTABLISHED BY MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT AND JUSTICE RICARDO A. RODRIGUEZ AT THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 28, A DOCTRINE THAT IS BASED ON THE LOFTIEST NATIONAL INTERESTS AT A TIME WHEN THE MONOLITHIC UNITY OF ALL PANAMANIAN IS NEEDED." END TEXT

3. COMMENT: FACT THAT GOP ISSUED A CLARIFYING COMMUNIQUE ON DAY AFTER MINISTER RICARDO RODRIGUEZ'S MAY 28 STATEMENT OF GOVERNMENT RESTRICTIONS ON MEDIA -- AND FACT THAT CLARIFICATION CAME FROM "ACTING" MINISTER -- TEND TO CONFIRM REPORT (PARA 5, REFTEL) THAT RODRIGUEZ HAD EXCEEDED HIS INSTRUCTIONS. IF HE DID INDEED GOOF, AS IT APPEARS, THIS WOULD ALSO ACCOUNT FOR OTHERWISE UNEXPLAINED EMERGENCE OF AN ACTING MINISTER THE NEXT DAY.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TEXT, COMMUNIQUE, NEWS MEDIA COMMENTS, INFORMATION CONTROL
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 30 MAY 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975PANAMA03189
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750190-0378
From: PANAMA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t1975055/aaaaaefi.tel
Line Count: 94
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 PANAMA 3165
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 12 SEP 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <12 SEP 2003 by SmithRJ>; APPROVED <16 OCT 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: GOVERNMENT "RESTRICTIONS" ON MEDIA CLARIFIED
TAGS: PINT, SOPN, PN, (RODRIGUEZ MAYLIN, CESAR), (RODRIGUEZ, RICARDO A)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006